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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001811

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [EG](#) [SU](#) [KPAL](#) [KNNP](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR GEN ABIZAID'S VISIT TO CAIRO

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and (c).

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Summary  
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1. (C) GEN Abizaid, Embassy Cairo warmly welcomes your visit as an opportunity to review our agenda on regional security and the future of our FMF assistance to Egypt. President Mubarak believes, and the MoD's senior leadership will reiterate, that our mil-mil relationship is the cornerstone of the broader bilateral relationship. The military views the USD 1.3 billion in annual foreign military assistance as an entitlement, granted at the time of the Camp David Accords. Consequently, Field Marshal Tantawi and his advisors resent increasing Congressional challenges to Egypt's FMF budget. MoD officials know they will face another challenge in Congress during the upcoming budget cycle, but Field Marshal Tantawi received assurances from the range of senior USG officials he recently met in Washington of the Administration's support for the current level of FMF funding. While we continue to offer suggestions on how to strengthen our cooperation with the MoD through military transformation planning and increased public outreach on our military cooperation, our influence remains somewhat limited. The MoD's general adversity to change, will hamper our efforts to help Egypt explain the value of their military assistance package to Congress. End summary.

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FMF: Congressional challenges and the IMC  
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2. (C) Protecting Egypt's earmarked military assistance is the MoD's number one priority. The absence of an earmark for Egypt's FMF in the original FY06 appropriations bill upset the GOE. Congress later restored the earmark in conference, but the episode still rankles. MoD leadership regards the FMF-funded military modernization as a national security issue and warn that any reduction in USG funding will be made up with money currently allocated to health, education, and other social programs. They also warn that any loss of military assistance from Washington will force Egypt to source from non-U.S. suppliers, including the Chinese. Tantawi will probably tell you he wants more proactive Administration support with Congress this year. You can remind him that the GOE shares responsibility to persuade Congress through support for U.S. global priorities.

3. (C) The International Medical Center (IMC): Egypt's treatment of unauthorized patients at the FMF-funded IMC violates the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). We do not yet know what the Congressional reaction will be. The Field Marshal has, thus far, opted to continue to allow the IMC to treat unauthorized patients at IMC despite State and Defense Department warnings. Tantawi has a personal interest in the IMC and often takes visiting Defense Ministers and other diplomatic groups to tour the facility. He also fundamentally cannot believe that the USG would create a showdown over medical care. State's Political Military Bureau will soon notify Congress of the violation. If Tantawi raises this with you, you should reiterate the USG position that continued unauthorized treatment at IMC is a serious issue. We recommend that the Field Marshal instruct the IMC to stop unauthorized treatment immediately.

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Key Mil-Mil Themes  
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4. (C) Interoperability: Egypt is unlikely to sign either a Communications Interoperability Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) or an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in the near term. After some delay, the MoD has agreed to hold bilateral talks on ACSA in late April. Although our joint exercise schedule has been hampered by the absence of a CISMOA or ACSA, the GOE supports the Bright Star exercises. We have recently started frank bilateral discussions with the MoD on the need to control costs and prevent overbilling for the next Bright Star.

5. (C) Transformation: At the MCC in November, we asked MoD officials to outline its transformation strategy, but they declined. Likewise, Tantawi's senior advisors declined repeated offers to brief Field Marshall Tantawi on

transformation planning during his counterpart visit to the U.S. in March. Because Egyptian focus on this issue could enhance support for FMF, we will continue to seek ways to encourage the MoD to discuss this with us.

16. (C) Modernization: After considerable U.S. urging, Egypt has prepared a draft 20-year military modernization plan, which they presented at the 2005 MCC. Getting Egypt to ensure that its requests for acquisitions are consistent with its plan will be key, and we should continue to press that point. Although we will also encourage the MoD to think more critically about possible alternate uses for facilities such as the Tank Plant (post production) and whether Egypt still needs to retain its stock of aging and difficult-to-maintain Soviet equipment, the MoD has thus far not shared its planning with us.

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Regional Security  
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17. (C) Israeli-Palestinian Situation: We stress at every opportunity the need for Egypt to urge Hamas to recognize Israel, disavow violence, and accept the agreements already made between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. GOE support for President Abbas remains strong, but they view him as weak. Egypt is currently focused on relieving humanitarian suffering in Gaza and has donated food through the Karem Shalom crossing. You might ask Tantawi for an update on the GOE view of the situation.

18. (C) Sudan: On rehatting AMIS, the GOE does not believe the African Union's March 10 Peace and Security Commission statement on Darfur means that there must be a peace agreement in Darfur before UN forces establish their mission. But the GOE does believe that a peace agreement should be reached as soon as possible. Although we stress the urgency of the humanitarian situation and our view that rapid UN involvement is key, GOE officials have said they believe the violence is diminishing.

19. (C) Iraq: Although Tantawi heard in Washington that the U.S. is committed to ensuring a stable Iraq, he will nonetheless remind you that the GOE supports the presence of U.S. troops and would oppose a withdrawal at this time. He will also express concerns about Iran's interference in Iraq. If appropriate, you may want to draw Tantawi out on Iran and the direction of its nuclear program. (Note: The GOE voted at the IAEA in favor of reporting Iran to the UNSC. End note).

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Political Reform  
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10. (C) President Mubarak recently told Egyptian newspaper editors that his January meeting with Vice President Cheney and his February meeting with Secretary Rice indicated that the USG was satisfied with Egypt's reform process. This is not the case. The GOE is nominally proceeding with its reform agenda, centered on an ambitious plan to create 4.5 million jobs over the next six years, but no concrete results have been observed thus far. The postponement of local council elections until 2008 suggests that the GOE leadership is moving cautiously. The February 3 Red Sea ferry accident and the avian influenza crisis (four human cases thus far) have also put the GOE in a defensive stance. The opposition bloc in the new Parliament, which includes 88 independent deputies affiliated with the banned but tolerated Muslim Brotherhood, has kept up a steady stream of criticism of the GOE. Secular opposition activist Ayman Nour, who placed a distant second to Mubarak in the September 2005 presidential elections, remains in prison after his December 24, 2005 conviction on politically-motivated forgery charges. Nour's appeal before Egypt's highest court will be heard on May 18. Tantawi will tell you that internal reform is underway and will continue to proceed at a pace appropriate for Egypt.

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